

# Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies & Science

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## Appendix C: Samples of Student Writing

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## Samples of Student Writing

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Following are writing samples that have been annotated to illustrate the criteria required to meet the standards for particular types of writing—argument, informational/explanatory text, and narrative—in a given grade. Each of the samples exhibits the level of quality required to meet the Writing standards for that grade; some samples, as noted in their descriptions, exceed the standards' requirements in one or more ways.

The range of accomplishment within each grade reflects differences in individual development as well as in the conditions under which the student writers were expected to work. Some of the samples were written in class or for homework; others were written for on-demand assessments; still others were the result of extended projects that involved research. Where possible, each sample includes information about the circumstances under which it was produced. The samples come from students in kindergarten through grade 8 and from high school students in grades 9, 10, and 12. The students attended school in a number of states and districts across the country.

At the lower grades, the samples include “opinion” writing, an elementary type of argument in which students give reasons for their opinions and preferences. Because reasons are required, such writing helps prepare students for drafting the arguments they will be expected to create beginning in grade 6.

### Acknowledgment

The *Standards* work group would like to express its appreciation to colleagues in Massachusetts, California, and Washington state as well as to those at ACT, Inc., and the *Concord Review* who helped find and obtain permission for several of the samples included in the set. The group also would like to express its appreciation to the New Standards Project and to the International Reading Association, which allowed the use of several samples from their publications.

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## Permissions

The following student writing samples have been reprinted for the Common Core State Standards Initiative with the express permission of the following organizations and individuals.

The National Center on Education and the Economy, on behalf of New Standards:

"I Went to Disnand"; "Frag (Frogs)"; "My fabit book is do you Want to be my friend"; "My Big Book About Spain"; "I bot a little coton ball"; "Owl Moon"; "My first tooth is gone"; "Horses"; "Whey my Puppys Ranaway"; "Zoo Field Trip"; "Author Response: Roald Dahl"; "Getting Shot and Living Through It"; "A Geographical Report"; "The Old Man and the Sea"; "\_\_\_\_\_ School Bond Levy"

Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction:

"Glowing Shoes"; "Video Cameras in Classrooms"

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

"Dear Mr. Sandler"; "A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus"; "Animal Farm"

California Department of Education:

"Miss Sadie"; "Football"

The *Concord Review*:

"In the Wake of the Spanish Lady: American Economic Resilience in the Aftermath of the Influenza Epidemic of 1918"

ACT, Inc.:

Untitled essay on dress codes

Permission to reprint each of the following samples was granted by its author:

"Fact vs. Fiction and All the Grey Space in Between"; "The Making of a Human Voice and How to Use It"

## Student Sample: K, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece that was produced in class.

### I Went to Disnand

I went to disnand (Disneyland) we wen (went) frorw (from) the deser (desert). I had a fun on vacshne (vacation). at Disnand (Disneyland). I see lot of rids (rides). I went on the mader hon (Matterhorn). I went on fer wel (Ferris wheel). I went on a meere go rowrg (merry-go-round). I went on a pol (?). I went my house.

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#### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes a situation by naming a place.
  - *disnand* (Disneyland)
- recounts several loosely linked actions, controlling for chronological order.
  - *I had a fun on vacshne* (vacation). . . . *I see lot (lots) of rids* (rides). *I went on the mader hon* (Matterhorn). . . . *I went my house*.
- provides a reaction to what happened.
  - *I had a fun on vacshne* (vacation).
- provides a sense of closure.
  - *I went my house*.
- demonstrates a command of some of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece illustrates consistent control of beginning-of-sentence capitalization and end-of-sentence punctuation. The writer also uses capital letters appropriately in the title of the piece.

## Student Sample: K, Informational/Explanatory

This informational report is a process piece that was produced in class.

### Fraggs (Frogs)

To day befor (before) We had riyda (writing) groos (groups) Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ red (read) us a storrry (story) a baowt (about) frogs. We had to riet (write) a baowt (about) frags (frogs). We haf (have) a tadpol (tadpole) in the sciens (science) sentr (center). It has 2 bac (back) ligs (legs) and wen (when) it has 2 frunt (front) ligs (legs) its tal (tail) disupirs (disappears) and it can not eyt (eat) wen (when) its maot (mouth) is chajn (changing). Then the scknn (skin) gets to (too) little and the frags pol (pull) off thrr (their) scknn (skin) an thaa (they) eyt (eat) it. Saum (Some) of the frogs bloo (blow) baubools (bubbles). Frogs lad (laid) eggs that look like jele (jelly) and the fish eyt (eat) some but some hach (hatch) to tadpoos (tadpoles). It gros (grows) bigr (bigger) and bigr (bigger) and bigr (bigger).

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### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes the topic in a title and goes beyond the title to create a context for writing about frogs.
  - *To day befor (before) We had riyda (writing) groos (groups) Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ red (read) us a storrry (story) a baowt (about) frags.*
- supplies facts and information relevant to the topic.
  - *It has 2 bac (back) ligs (legs) and wen (when) it has 2 frunt (front) ligs (legs) its tal (tail) disupirs (disappears) . . . Then the scknn (skin) gets to (too) little and the frags pol (pull) off thrr (their) scknn (skin) . . .*
- uses additive (adversative and temporal) linking words.
  - *. . . and wen (when) . . . Then . . . but . . .*
- provides examples relevant to the topic.
  - *Frogs lad (laid) eggs that look like jele (jelly) . . .*
- offers a sense of closure.
  - *It gros (grows) bigr (bigger) and bigr and bigr.*

For a kindergartener, the writer demonstrates remarkable control of the conventions of standard written English. As this was a process piece, it is reasonable to assume that the writer received feedback to correct possible errors with capital letters and periods.

## Student Sample: K, Argument (Opinion)

This opinion piece about a work of literature was produced in class.

### **My fabit Book is do you Want to be my friend**

the mas (mouse) as (asked) the hos (horse) if you will be my friend the hos (horse) sayd (said) No. the mas (mouse) Fid (found) a FRIEND the mos (mouse) as (asked) the lutl (little) mas (mouse) if you will be my friend the latr (other) mas (mouse) Sayd (said) Yes they dig a hol (hole) in the gan (ground) my fait (favorite) pot (part) is the hos (horse)

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### **Annotation**

The writer of this piece

- introduces the topic by naming the title of the book.
  - *My fabit (favorite) Book is do you Want to be my friend*
- expresses preferences relevant to the topic (a favorite book and a favorite part of the book).
  - *. . . my fait (favorite) pot (part) is the hos (horse)*

Although the writer does not specify the reasons for his preferences, this piece is still an adequate representation of opinion writing at the kindergarten level.



## Student Sample: Grade 1, Informational/Explanatory

This informational report was produced in class.

### My Big Book About Spain

Spain is in Europe. Spain is located in the south western tip of Europe. Europe is a far away place from here. Spain has alot of fiestas. In some of the fiestas they make masks and make special food too. Spian has bull fights and I would want to see one. I think Spian looks like a upside down hat. In some of the fiestas the people are loud. Some of the fiestas are even beautiful and colorful. Spain has alot of different people. In the bull fights they make the bulls tired and make them fall out. Spain is very colorful even if you go there you will see I'm right. Spain has 5 neighbors. Spain's neighbors are France, Andorra, Algeria, Portugal and Morocco. One day when I am a researcher I am going to go to Spain and write about it!

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#### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- provides a title to establish the topic.
  - *My Big Book About Spain*
- supplies facts and information about the topic.
  - *Spain is located in the south western tip of Europe.*
  - *Spain has alot of fiestas.*
  - *Spian . . . has bull fights . . .*
  - *Spain's neighbors are France, Andorra, Algeria, Portugal and Morocco.*
- provides a conclusion.
  - *One day when I am a researcher I am going to go to Spain and write about it!*

Although this piece does not illustrate the successful grouping of like facts (and hence no linking words), it otherwise is an adequate representation of grade 1 report writing. With the removal of two sentences (*I think Spain looks like a upside down hat* and *Spain has alot of different people*), the paper's organization would be improved. This piece illustrates the writer's awareness of beginning-of-sentence capitalization and end-of-sentence punctuation as well as the use of capital letters in proper nouns.

## Student Sample: Grade 1, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece that was produced in class.

### I bot a little coton ball

I went to biye (buy) a hamster I was so excited I woted (wanted) to own (run) all the waye (way) these (there) but I didn't want to get run over.

I got a nerves (nervous) hamster but I didn't know she was going to be so nerves (nervous) So we bot (bought) her that afternoon she skwet (squeaked) so much she suwed (sounded) like a skewing (squeaking) bed. And at nite (night) when my Dad came home he sedi (said) wus (what's) that noesc (noise) I sed it is nibllet (Nibblet) I named (named) my hamster nibllet becaus (because) she nibls (nibbles) to (too) much becaus she liks (likes) that She is a difent (different) hamster becaus (because) Flufey (Fluffy) was there befor (before) that hamster but he did (died) becaus my bother (brother) sed (said) thot (that) hamster onley (only) live for tow (two) yers (years) but I did tek (take) her out of the box.

After I took her out she was so soft and cuddley (cuddly) she felt like a littl (little) coten (cotton) ball.

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### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes the situation with the opening sentence.
  - *I went to biye (buy) a hamster . . .*
- recounts appropriately sequenced events. (Though the writer does not always signal the chronology of events with transition words, the piece holds together logically.)
  - *I got a nerves (nervous) hamster . . . And at nite (night) when my Dad came home . . . After I took her out . . .*
- uses detail to describe actions and incidents.
  - *I was so excited I woted (wanted) to own (run) all the waye (way) these (there) . . .*
  - *. . . she skwet (squeaked) so much she suwed (sounded) like a skewing (squeaking) bed.*
- includes dialogue and linking words.
  - *And at nite (night) when my Dad came home he sedi (said) wus (what's) that noesc (noise) . . .*
  - *. . . so . . . and . . . After . . .*
- provides a concluding sentence that signals closure and echoes the title.
  - *After I took her out she was so soft and cuddley (cuddly) she felt like a littl (little) coten (cotton) ball.*
- demonstrates a growing command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - There is some evidence in this piece that the writer understands various uses of capital letters: frequently sentences begin with a capital letter, and the pronoun *I* is consistently capitalized. With the exception of the pronoun *I* in the title, however, there are no capital letters there. Periods end some sentences but not all.

## Student Sample: Grade 2, Argument (Opinion)

This opinion piece about a work of literature was produced in class.

### Owl Moon

When you go owling you don't need words, or worm (warm) or any thing but hope. This is (from) the book Owl Moon. This book is written by Jane Yolen. I like that phrase Because The boy was happy becaus (because) he got to go owling and hes (he's) been wonted (wanting) to go owling for a long time and he finally got to go.

When other kids are happy that makes me happy. I like it Because it makes me feel good Because you don't haf't (have) to have words to go owling but you haf't to have hope to see an owl.

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### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- introduces the central message of the book she is writing about with a quotation from the book.
  - *When you go owling you don't need words, or worm (warm) or any thing but hope. This is (from) the book Owl Moon.*
- states an opinion relative to the book and provides reasons to support it.
  - *I like that phrase Because The boy was happy becaus (because) he got to go owling and hes (he's) been wonted (wanting) to go owling for a long time and he finally got to go. When other kids are happy that makes me happy.*
- uses words to link ideas.
  - *I like it Because you don't haf't (have) to have words to go owling but you haf't to have hope to see an owl.*
- includes a concluding sentence.
  - *I like it Because you don't haf't (have) to have words to go owling but you haf't to have hope to see an owl.*
- demonstrates a command of some of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece illustrates the writer's understanding that capital letters are used in a title, that the pronoun *I* should be capitalized, and that sentences begin with a capital letter. The title of the book is underlined and most words are spelled correctly. The use of the comma and the apostrophe is not consistent, but all sentences end with periods.

## Student Sample: Grade 2, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece that was produced in class.

### My first tooth is gone

I recall one winter night. I was four. My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend. It was my sister and I had run right into each other. Boy! did we cry. But not only did I cry, my tooth was bleeding. Then it felt funny. Then plop! There it was lying in my hand. So that night I put it under my pillow and in the morning I found something. It was not my tooth it was two dollars. So I ran down the hall, like I wasen't supposed to, and showed my mom and dad. They were suprised because when they lost teeth the only thing they got is 50¢.

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes a situation in time and place appropriate for what is to come.
  - *I recall one winter night. I was four. My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend.*
- develops sequenced actions using linking words to signal chronological ordering.
  - *My sister and I were running down the hall and something happend. . . . But not only did I cry . . . Then it felt funny. Then plop! There it was lying in my hand.*
- provides a reaction to what happened.
  - *Boy! did we cry.*
  - *Then it felt funny.*
- includes some detail.
  - *So I ran down the hall, like I wasen't supposed to, and showed my mom and dad.*
- provides a sense of closure.
  - *They were suprised because when they lost teeth the only thing they got is 50¢.*
- demonstrates a growing command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece illustrates the writer's consistent use of beginning-of-sentence capitalization and end-of-sentence punctuation (both periods and exclamation points). The pronoun *I* is also capitalized consistently, and almost all the words are spelled correctly. The writer sets off a parenthetical phrase with commas and uses an apostrophe correctly.

## Student Sample: Grade 3, Informational/Explanatory

This informational report is a process piece that was produced in class.

### Horses

By \_\_\_\_\_

#### Why I Chose This Animal

I chose horses because I like to ride them. I also like to pet them. At the camp I go to everybody gets to have horses back riding lessons. Horses are so beautiful and fun to ride.

#### Horse Families

A mother or female horse is called a mare. A father or male horse is called a stallion. A foal is a baby horse.

#### Markings

A star is a little white diamond on the forelock. The forelock is a horse's forehead. A race is a white line down the middle of the horse's face. A blaze is kind of like a race but wider. If the white line on its face spreads out to its eyes it is called a white face. A small amount of white on its muzzle is called a snip. A muzzle is a horse's mouth.

#### Breeds and Color Coats

Icelandic and Shetland ponies are very small when they are full grown. Chestnuts are red-brown and Roans have white hairs on their brown coat. Cream is a rare color. Rare means you don't see the color cream very much. Brown horses are brown all over. Blacks are black all over. Piebalds have black and white spots. Skewbalds are brown and white. Duns are a sandy brown with black manes and tails. Palominos have a yellowish coat and a shiny mane and tail. Grays have black and white hairs that make the color gray. Bays are brown with black manes, tails, and legs. White are white all over.

#### Breeds I Like

I like thoroughbreds because they are such a pretty brown. I like Arabians because their different coats are very beautiful and they're one of the oldest horses. I like Morgans because they have a beautiful reddish-brown coat. I like Lipizzaners because their white coats are so very pretty. I like Icelandic and Shetland ponies because they are so very cute, pretty and small.

#### Horses from Different Countries

Hokaidos are from Japan, Sumbas are from Indonesia, and Pintos are from America.

#### Horse Movement

A horse can walk, trot, canter, and gallop. A trot is kind of like a skip. A canter is like a fast skip. And a gallop is like running.

#### Friendly Horses

Horses can be great friends. Some horses can be dangerous. Most horses are very lovable.

#### Foals

Baby horses are called foals. When a foal is ready to be born, the mare (the mother horse) lies down. As soon as the foal is born it struggles to break out of the membrane sack. When the foal breaks out of the sack it breathes on its own. In about less than a minute the foal tries to get up and walk on its own. Foals are born with their hooves first and head last. They drink their mother's milk until they're nine to ten months old.

#### How Long a Horse Lives

They live about 12 to 14 years.

#### Horse Habitat

You usually find horses in a barn. Some horses are wild. You can find horses on ranches too.

#### What Horses Eat

Horses eat hay, grass, barley and oats. The best food for a tired horse is oatmeal. Don't give a young horse too much oatmeal, it makes them too hyper. Horses love carrots, apples, molasses and sugar cubes. A block of salt gives the horse important minerals and makes them thirsty so they will drink enough water.

#### The Most Dangerous Horse

The most dangerous horse is the Percheron. Some people cannot pronounce that so they call them war horses. It is only dangerous if it is a wild horse. If it is wild it can kill you in 7 to 8 minutes. If it is trained it is nice like any other horse.

#### The Fastest Horse

The fastest horse is the wild stallion. If you thought, like I did that the Wild stallion was really dangerous you were wrong. A wild stallion can kill you but it could take up to one hour.

#### The First Horses

The first horses were no bigger than a fox and looked like a donkey. They had short tails and small ears. These horses lived millions of years ago, but now they are extinct. The only way we knew there were horses like that was because the first humans (our ancestors) painted these horses on ancient cave walls. These horses lived in North America and over the years they changed into the horses we know now.

#### Horse Survival

Most horses live on farms or ranches, but some horses are wild. Wild horses can survive hard weather and they graze on hills, marshes and grasslands. These days wild horses are very rare. People work to keep these wild horses free.

#### My Description of a Horse

A horse is a mammal because it has fur, drinks milk and their babies are born alive. They have four legs and hooves. They have beautiful long manes and tails.

I like horses and I know a lot about them. I like to ride them and they're so beautiful! Their coats are beautiful, I wish I had a horse of my own!

---

#### **Annotation**

The writer of this piece

- produces an introduction that explains why she chose horses as her topic and that provides a general statement about horses.
  - *I chose horses because I like to ride them. . . . Horses are so beautiful and fun to ride.*
- uses headers as an organizing structure, clustering related information together logically.
  - *Horse Families; Markings; Breeds and Color Coats; Horses from Different Countries*
- provides adequate, relevant, and specific facts.
  - *Hocaidos are from Japan, Sumbas are from Indonesia, and Pintos are from America.*
  - *A horse can walk, trot, canter, and gallop.*

- *They [horses] live about 12 to 14 years.*
- *The most dangerous horse is the Percheron.*
- uses linking words appropriately to connect ideas.
  - *I like Morgans because they have a beautiful reddish-brown coat.*
  - *When a foal is ready to be born, the mare (the mother horse) lies down.*
  - *The first horses were no bigger than a fox and looked like a donkey.*
  - *Most horses live on farms or ranches, but some horses are wild.*
- includes a concluding section.
  - *I like horses and I know a lot about them. I like to ride them and they're so beautiful! Their coats are beautiful, I wish I had a horse of my own!*
- demonstrates a growing command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are some errors, such as the following.
  - *When the foal breaks out of the sack it breathes on it's own. In about less than a minute the foal tries to get up and walk on it's own.*
  - *Don't give a young horse too much oatmeal, it makes them too hyper.*

## Student Sample: Grade 3, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece that was produced in class.

### When my Puppys Ranaway

ONE night when the air was warm, my puppys were sleeping on the back porch. Me and my sisters were getting ready for bed.

When I was in bed, I read a chapter from my Nancy Drew book. When I finished the chapter I turned out my lamp. I wuldn't go to sleep.

I went into the living room. I saw my mom geting ready to walk out the door. I asked "where are you going"? "Just for a drive" she replied. She had a worried exspression on her face.

I knew somthing was wrong.

I thought maybe if I went outside and played with my puppys. I would forget about moms worried exspression and go to sleep.

When I opened The back door I exspected my puppys Maggie and Tucker to jump up on me. They didn't come at all. I called, they still didn't come.

Now I knew somthing was wrong.

I went and woke up my dad, he said moms got it under control I thought mom had taken them to the vet because somthing was really wrong. Dad wouldn't tell me anything else. I went to my room and cried. Thats all I rembered about that night because I fell asleep.

The next day I still worried.

I worried all through school.

When I got home from me and my mom made a snack for sisters.

I asked my mom, "so were are the puppys"? Her eyes started to fill with tears as she answered my question with 3 words, "I don't know," she burst into tears. So did I. She hugged me. "If we never find them I am sure they will have a good home.

I went outside and sat in moms rocking chair. I cried some more.

Mom came out I got up. She sat down and motioned me by waving her hand to come and sit on her lap. I went over and cried on her shoulder.

After dinner that night we went looking for them, we couldn't find them at all.

My dad after work each day went to the pound to see if they had picked them up. They didn't at all.

I've got over them leaving because mom says we can get 2 new puppys very soon.



## Annotation

The writer of this piece

- establishes the story's time and location and hints at the focus of the events to follow.
  - *ONE night when the air was warm, my puppies were sleeping on the back porch. . . . I turned out my lamp. I wouldn't go to sleep. . . . I saw my mom getting ready to walk out the door. . . . She had a worried expression on her face. I knew something was wrong.*
- recounts a sequence of events that unfolds naturally using temporal words, phrases, and clauses and that provides pacing.
  - *When I opened The back door I expected my puppies Maggie and Tucker to jump up on me. They didn't come at all. I called, they still didn't come.*
- tells what the narrator thought or felt.
  - *I knew something was wrong.*
  - *The next day I still worried.*
  - *I worried all through school.*
  - *I've got over them leaving because mom says we can get 2 new puppies very soon.*
- develops the character (narrator) through a description of external behavior.
  - *I went to my room and cried.*
  - *I went outside and sat in moms rocking chair. I cried some more.*
- provides descriptive details.
  - *Her eyes started to fill with tears as she answered my question with 3 words, "I don't know," she burst into tears. So did I. She hugged me.*
- employs dialogue effectively.
  - *I asked "where are you going?" "Just for a drive" she replied. She had a worried expression on her face.*
- provides a satisfying conclusion.
  - *I've got over them leaving because mom says we can get 2 new puppies very soon.*
- demonstrates a growing command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are many minor errors, such as the following.
  - *When my Puppies Ranaway*
  - *I went and woke up my dad, he said moms got it under control I thought mom had taken them to the vet because something was really wrong.*

## Student Sample: Grade 4, Narrative

This narrative was produced for an on-demand assessment. Students were asked to respond to the following prompt: "One morning you wake up and find a strange pair of shoes next to your bed. The shoes are glowing. In several paragraphs, write a story telling what happens."

### Glowing Shoes

One quiet, Tuesday morning, I woke up to a pair of bright, dazzling shoes, lying right in front of my bedroom door. The shoes were a nice shade of violet and smelled like catnip. I found that out because my cats, Tigger and Max, were rubbing on my legs, which tickled.

When I started out the door, I noticed that Tigger and Max were following me to school. Other cats joined in as well. They didn't even stop when we reached Main Street!

"Don't you guys have somewhere to be?" I quizzed the cats.

"Meeeeeooooow!" the crowd of cats replied.

As I walked on, I observed many more cats joining the stalking crowd. I moved more swiftly. The crowd of cats' walk turned into a prance. I sped up. I felt like a rollercoaster zooming past the crowded line that was waiting for their turn as I darted down the sidewalk with dashing cats on my tail.

When I reached the school building . . . SLAM! WHACK! "Meeow!" The door closed and every single cat flew and hit the door.

Whew! Glad that's over! I thought.

I walked upstairs and took my seat in the classroom.

"Mrs. Miller! Something smells like catnip! Could you open the windows so the smell will go away? Pleecease?" Zane whined.

"Oh, sure! We could all use some fresh air right now during class!" Mrs. Miller thoughtfully responded.

"Nooooooo!" I screamed.

When the teacher opened the windows, the cats pounced into the building.

"It's a cat attack!" Meisha screamed.

Everyone scrambled on top of their desks. Well, everyone except Cade, who was absolutely obsessed with cats.

"Awww! Look at all the fuzzy kitties! They're sooo cute! Mrs. Miller, can I pet them?" Cade asked, adorably.

"Why not! Pet whichever one you want!" she answered.

"Thanks! Okay, kitties, which one of you wants to be petted by Cade Dahlin?" he asked the cats. None of them answered. They were all staring at me.

"Uh, hi?" I stammered.

Rrrriiiiiing! The recess bell rang. Everyone, including Mrs. Miller, darted out the door.

Out at recess, Lissa and I played on the swings.

"Hey! Look over there!" Lissa shouted. Formed as an ocean wave, the cats ran toward me.

Luckily, Zane's cat, Buddy, was prancing along with the aroma of catnip surrounding his fur. He ran up to me and rubbed on my legs. The shoes fell off. Why didn't I think of this before? I notioned.

"Hey Cade! Catch!"

Cade grabbed the shoes and slipped them on.

The cats changed directions and headed for Cade.

"I'm in heaven!" he shrieked.

---

## Annotation

The writer of this piece

- produces an introduction that orients readers and draws them in by establishing a situation on which the story line is developed.
  - *One quiet, Tuesday morning, I woke up to a pair of bright, dazzling shoes, lying right in front of my bedroom door. The shoes were a nice shade of violet and smelled like catnip. I found that out because my cats, Tigger and Max, were rubbing on my legs, which tickled.*
- creates an organizing structure in which events are logically and causally sequenced.
  - The teacher opens the window; cats come into the classroom; at recess the cats surge toward the narrator; her shoes fall off; another student (one who loves cats) picks up the narrator's shoes; the cats move toward him; he is delighted.
  - *. . . Tigger and Max were following me to school. Other cats joined in as well. . . . When I reached the school building . . . SLAM! WHACK! "Meeyow!" The door closed and every single cat flew and hit the door.*
- creates a story with an initiating event (the narrator finding the shoes), complicating action (the cats following the narrator), climax (the narrator's shoes coming off), and resolution (the cats transferring their affections to the delighted student who now has the shoes).
- uses a variety of temporal words, phrases, and clauses to signal sequence.
  - *When I started out the door . . . As I walked on . . . When I reached the school building . . .*
- tells what the narrator thought or felt (internal responses of a character).
  - *I felt like a rollercoaster zooming past the crowded line that was waiting for their turn . . .*
  - *Whew! Glad that's over! I thought.*
- uses specific details to develop plot.
  - The sequence of events unfolds naturally from the point when the narrator finds the dazzling shoes smelling of catnip to the point when the narrator gives Cade the shoes to be free from all the cats.
- provides closure through a logical outcome of the event sequence.
  - The narrator describes Cade earlier in the piece as a student obsessed with cats. The story concludes logically because such a character would likely be pleased with the effects of wearing catnip-scented shoes.
- demonstrates an exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece illustrates an almost perfect control of conventions. There is even a sentence fragment used appropriately: *Well, everyone except Cade, who was absolutely obsessed with cats.* It should be noted, however, that the piece was likely edited for publication.

## Student Sample: Grade 4, Argument (Opinion)

This argument is a process piece that was produced in class.

### Zoo Field Trip

Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

We have a problem. The wildlife here in \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited. There is not a lot of opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation. If we took a field trip to \_\_\_\_\_ our problem would be solved. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to take our class for a great learning experience. In addition, we will provide a study guide to \_\_\_\_\_ to identify the animals and provide information about conservation of endangered wildlife.

If we went on a field trip, we will learn about the wildlife from around the world and how \_\_\_\_\_ provides a natural habitat for them to live and breed. This information would help us to understand the importance of science in our day to day life. We would use math to make a budget and figure out a way to earn money. These skills will be very useful again and again. We will learn how to make a schedule with target dates. This will provide us with a plan that covers the entire project from start to finish. The preparation of the study guide will require lots of research and organization of information.

The first thing to do is research, research, research! Next, we will choose a fund raiser (with your approval, of course). This will earn money for the field trip. The parents will hopefully chip in their time and money, if we don't get enough. We will prepare a plan schedule. This will provide the dates that team members will need to accomplish the steps toward our goal. My competent adult model is the Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World. It shows us step by step how to plan a trip and what to see.

Now, you are asking why should I approve a trip to \_\_\_\_\_? How does this help \_\_\_\_\_ and the students? Besides the fact that the project planning, fund raising, budgeting and reporting will provide an excellent learning opportunity, it will provide education. It will also provide awareness of wildlife and the importance of conservation. This project will be evaluated by its successful planning and its ability to involve our class in wildlife conservation. The trip will be evaluated by the student participation on the trip and a plan of conservation that identifies what we can all do to protect and respect wildlife so they will still be around when we have children.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- introduces an opinion about a concrete issue.
  - *We have a problem. The wildlife here in \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited. There is not a lot of opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation. If we took a field trip to \_\_\_\_\_ our problem would be solved. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to take our class for a great learning experience.*

- supports the opinion with relevant reasons.
  - . . . we will provide a study guide to \_\_\_\_\_ to identify the animals and provide information about conservation of endangered wildlife. . . . we will learn about the wildlife from around the world and how \_\_\_\_\_ provides a natural habitat for them to live and breed. This information would help us to understand the importance of science in our day to day life. We would use math to make a budget and figure out a way to earn money. . . . We will learn how to make a schedule with target dates. . . . The preparation of the study guide will require lots of research and organization of information.
- links the ideas with words, phrases, and clauses.
  - The first thing to do . . . Next . . . Now, you are asking . . . Besides the fact . . .
- adopts a relatively formal style.
  - The entire style of this document is formal, as appropriate for students writing to secure permission from an adult audience.
- provides a concluding section.
  - The final paragraph details possible objections to the field trip and argues against each one:  
*Now, you are asking why should I approve a trip to \_\_\_\_\_? . . .*  
*Besides the fact that the project planning, fund raising, budgeting and reporting will provide an excellent learning opportunity, it will provide education. It will also provide awareness of wildlife and the importance of conservation.*
- demonstrates an exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - This piece has been edited by student response groups as well as by adults, so it is nearly flawless in terms of observing the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 5, Informational/Explanatory

The informational writing that follows was produced in class.

### Author Response: Roald Dahl

Roald Dahl is a very interesting author to me. That's because he knows what a kid wants to hear. He has a "kid's mind". He is the only author that I know that makes up interesting words like Inkland, fizz wizard, and gobblefunking. All his stories are the same type. I don't mean the same story written again and again. What I mean is that they all have imagination, made up words, and disgusting thoughts. Some of his stories that have those things are Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Matilda, The Witches and Danny the Champion of the World. The Witches is the book that I am reading right now, and it is like The BFG, another book that is by Roald Dahl. They are alike because in The BFG, Sophie and the BFG (the big friendly giant), are trying to stop other giants from eating human beings. The Witches has the same problem. The Boy, (he has no name), is trying to stop the witches from turning children into small mice, and then killing the mice by stepping on them. Both stories have to stop evil people from doing something horrible. Roald Dahl uses a lot of similes. Some similes that he used that I like are: Up he shot again like a bullet in the barrel of a gun. And my favorite is: They were like a chorus of dentists' drills all grinding away together. In all of Roald Dahl's books, I have noticed that the plot or the main problem of the story is either someone killing someone else, or a kid having a bad life. But it is always about something terrible. All the characters that Roald Dahl ever made were probably fake characters. A few things that the main characters have in common are that they all are poor. None of them are rich. Another thing that they all have in common is that they either have to save the world, someone else, or themselves.

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- introduces the topic and provides a general observation about it to set a context for readers.
  - *Roald Dahl is a very interesting author to me. That's because he knows what a kid wants to hear.*
- uses adequate facts, concrete details, and vivid language from the books to convey ideas and insights.
  - *He is the only author that I know that makes up interesting words like Inkland, fizz wizard, and gobblefunking.*
  - *Roald Dahl uses a lot of similes. Some similes that he used that I like are: Up he shot again like a bullet in the barrel of a gun. And my favorite is: They were like a chorus of dentists' drills all grinding away together.*
  - *In all of Roald Dahl's books, I have noticed that the plot or the main problem of the story is either someone killing someone else, or a kid having a bad life.*
- employs a formal, objective style.
  - *. . . I have noticed . . .*
  - *A few things that the main characters have in common . . .*
- includes only appropriate information.
  - *The writer stays focused on the characteristics shared by the Roald Dahl books.*
- uses appropriate links to join ideas.
  - *The Witches is the book that I am reading right now, and it is like The BFG, another book that is by Roald Dahl. They are alike because . . .*

- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there is some awkward wording, such as the following example.

- *Both stories have to stop evil people from doing something horrible.*

## Student Sample: Grade 5, Narrative

This narrative is a process piece produced in class.

### Getting Shot and Living Through It

We were in the darkness filled, mountain-top cold, waiting room. We were preparing for the shots of our lives. Getting shots for malaria and more.

There were many benches all covered in the night. It was hard to see the color the murky dark but it seemed to be some sort of faded brown. The room was big, no, huge which gave it all the more reason to be terror bringing. Who knew what would be lurking in the corner! Rat, monster, anything! There were also doors. Three doors, which were also brown and also faded. One was the way in. Not the way out unfortunately. Another was the way to the other evil places. With the evil hallway and the evil office. The last door was the most evil, The Shot Room.

The rest of the room was filled with families. Including my family of five. My five year old self, my three year old bother, and my one year old sister. Then there was my mom and dad. Some of the other children were screeching or crying or not knowing what would happen to them. So they would just be playing. I was in the middle of both. I was playing with fear, playing, knowing what would happen, knowing that the worst moment of my life was coming over closer. It was like knowing you would be put to sleep, sent to the dementors, waiting to take a ride in the Electric Chair.

I had had shots before. They were not your best friend. After a long while a nurse said, "Alyssa, Trevor, and Taryn, your turn." It was our turn. I got half dragged and I half walked. The door creaked open. It was the room of no return. The door slammed shut. There was not way out. Grown-ups guarding every escape. Seeing there was no way out we gave up and went for it.

Trevor went first. Before the shot was even touching him he was already howling. When it did hit him he was yelling loud enough to deafen you. He was done. It was my turn. (He was still crying so a nurse tried to calm him down).

I was paralyzed with fear, I was death-defyed, I was scared. My mom and dad told me to "just be brave." "Just be brave?!" How could I "just be brave?!" But I had not time to think. It was coming. Just waiting to pounce, just waiting to penetrate my skin! I say why Trevor had screamed so loud. I couldn't hear anything, I could just see it coming, closer, closer!

It touched, entered my flesh, and fulfilled it's job. I started with a whimper the, BOOM! full blast cry.

When Taryn had her turn she didn't even notice! Ugh! She was supposed to cry the most! Worse than Trevor!

But then I remembered it was over. We opened the door and the sparkling sun blinded our eyes. It was over. All over. Finally.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- orients readers and creates interest by establishing the situation and setting the scene.
  - *We were in the darkness filled, mountain-top cold, waiting room. We were preparing for the shots of our lives.*



- creates an organizing structure in which events are logically sequenced.
  - *Trevor went first. . . . It was my turn. . . . When Taryn had her turn . . . .*
- uses detail to develop setting, plot, and character.
  - *We were in the darkness filled, mountain-top cold, waiting room. We were preparing for the shots of our lives.*
  - *There were also doors. Three doors, which were also brown and also faded. One was the way in. Not the way out unfortunately.*
  - *The rest of the room was filled with families. Including my family of five. My five year old self, my three year old bother, and my one year old sister.*
- employs a range of appropriate techniques, such as humor, pacing, and reporting characters' thoughts.
  - Humor through exaggeration: *Before the shot was even touching him he was already howling. When it did hit him he was yelling loud enough to deafen you.*
  - Pacing: *It touched, entered my flesh, and fulfilled it's job. I started with a whimper the, BOOM! full blast cry.*
  - Reporting a character's thoughts: *I was paralyzed with fear, I was death-defyed, I was scared.*
- provides closure and a realistic outcome, which is emphasized by the use of sentence fragments.
  - *We opened the door and the sparking sun blinded our eyes. It was over. All over. Finally.*
- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are some minor errors. There is some awkward and incorrect wording but also some interesting word structures, such as a rhetorically defensible sentence fragment and comma splice.
  - *We were in the darkness filled, mountain-top cold, waiting room.*
  - *We were preparing for the shots of our lives. Getting shots for malaria and more.*
  - *I was paralyzed with fear, I was death-defyed, I was scared.*

## Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument

This argument was written as homework after a class in which grade 6 students viewed a movie titled *Benchwarmers* and discussed how movie writers and producers promote smoking. The letter is addressed to the producer of a film in which smoking appears.

Dear Mr. Sandler,

Did you know that every cigarette a person smokes takes seven minutes off their life? I mentioned this because I just watched the movie, *Benchwarmers*, and I noticed that Carlos smoked. Why did you feel the need to have one of the characters smoke? Did you think that would make him look cool? Did you think that would make him look older? It did neither of those things. As a matter of fact, I think it made him look stupid and not very cool. Especially when he put out a cigarette on his tongue.

If I were producing a movie, I would want my characters to be strong, healthy and smart. I would not have any smokers in my movies for many reasons. The first reason is it sets a bad example for children. An estimated 450,000 Americans die each year from tobacco related disease. In fact, tobacco use causes many different types of cancers such as lung, throat, mouth, and tongue. Another reason not to promote smoking is it ages and wrinkles your skin. Who wants to look 75 if you are only 60? It turns your teeth yellow and may lead to gum disease and tooth decay. Lastly, smoking is a very expensive habit. A heavy smoker spends thousands of dollars a year on cigarettes. I can think of better things to spend money on.

So Mr. Sandler, I urge you to take smoking out of all future movies you produce. Instead of having your characters smoke have them do healthy things. That will set a positive influence for children instead of poisoning their minds. Thanks for reading my letter. I hope you agree with my opinion.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_

P.S. I love your Chanukah song.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this argument

- introduces a claim about a topic or concept.
  - *I would not have any smokers in my movies for many reasons.*
- supports claims with logical reasons.
  - *The first reason is it sets a bad example for children.*
  - *Another reason not to promote smoking is it ages and wrinkles your skin.*
  - *It turns your teeth yellow and may lead to gum disease and tooth decay.*
- supports reasons with detailed and relevant evidence.
  - *Lastly, smoking is a very expensive habit. A heavy smoker spends thousands of dollars a year on cigarettes.*
- signals the relationship between reasons using logical connecting words.
  - *The first reason . . . Another reason . . . Lastly . . .*
- sustains an objective style and tone.
  - *Dear Mr. Sandler . . . Thanks for reading my letter. I hope you agree with my opinion. . . . Sincerely . . .*
  - Except perhaps for the postscript, the level of formality is appropriate for an argument addressed to someone that the student does not know (in this case, a movie producer).

- includes only relevant information and evidence in support of claims.
- provides a concluding statement or section that offers a recommendation that follows from the argument.
  - *Instead of having your characters smoke have them do healthy things. That will set a positive influence for children instead of poisoning their minds.*
- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English, although there are a few problems, such as those in the examples below, that do not interfere materially with the underlying message.
  - *. . . I just watched the movie, Benchwarmers, and I noticed that Carlos smoked.*
  - *That will set a positive influence for children . . .*

## Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument

This argument (inappropriately named a story) is a process piece produced in class.

### A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus

People get pets so that they will never be lonely, and they will always have a friend to be there for them. Ask your heart, what makes the best pet??? Some people think a best pet is picky, energetic, and sneaky, but I think my pet is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me! Gus was about eight weeks old when we got him, now he is 4 ½ months old, and he is about as big as a size eight sneaker. He is a little gray and white kitten. If you look closely he has a gray tail, but there are darker gray rings around it. He has a little white on his face, and some on his tummy and paws. He has a little stripe on his leg but it is his back left leg only. He's very cute, and he purrs a lot! He also has a cute little gray nose.

One of the reasons why my cat Gus is the best pet is because he is a cuddle bug. When Gus was a baby, he had to be kept in a cage because he wasn't allowed to interact with the other pets until he was older. He couldn't interact with the other pets because when Twister was a baby, the ferrets bit her ear and dragged her under the bed, and bit her in the back of the neck and we didn't want the same thing to happen to Gus. Also because Twister had to be kept in a cage when she was little, too. His cage was in my room so when he meowed, as if to say, "Get me out!" I would have to take him out and sleep with him. All he would do is thank me for doing that by snuggling against my chin! Another example to prove that Gus is a cuddle bug, is that when I'm feeding Gus, I put his and Twister's bowl up on the counter when I do so, and Twister sits there patiently while Gus is snuggling against my legs to show affection toward me. He snuggles my leg even when I'm walking around! Well, at least he tries to, because he follows me, and when I stop walking, he starts to cuddle. Eventually I pick him up and cuddle him back!!! Finally, when I have nothing to do and I'm just sitting on my bed reading, Gus jumps up with me and then he pushes away the covers to get under them, and he sleeps on my chest to keep my company when I'm bored. After he slept on my tummy many times, he finally got the nickname \_\_\_\_\_ Cuddle Buddy. Now I always snuggle with my favorite cuddle buddy . . . Gus!!!

A second reason why Gus is the best pet is because he's playful. Most of the time when Gus is lying on the couch minding his own business, I'll reach out to pet him then he'll start biting my hand and attacking it!!! He does this to be playful, not to hurt anyone but he just wants to have fun. It kind of tickles when he does it, actually. Gus also has a little toy mouse that is attached to a string that I drag around the house so that Gus will follow it. The mouse has a leopard skin pattern on it with balls of fur as hands and feet. The mouse is about the size of the pencil sharpeners in Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ classroom. He goes after that mouse so fast that it's hard to see him running by to catch it. When Gus was a baby, I would put him in my bed to sleep with, but before we went to sleep, I would move my feet around underneath the covers, while Gus was on top chasing them around. Eventually, he got tired and lied down near my feet, but before he was completely asleep, I would pick him up and put him near my pillow and we slept together. Gus loves doing that all the time. I love how Gus is so playful!!!

The last reason why Gus is the best pet is because he loves me! He always misses me whenever I'm not there. When I come home from school and I open the door, Gus comes flying around the corner, and starts to climb my pants! When he gets high enough, I grab him in my arms and we start cuddling each other while Gus is happily purring. He does this a lot. Most of the time I'm in my room watching TV, while Gus and Twister are fighting and killing each other, they come dashing around the corner and into my room. I, of course, have to break up the fight. After that, I put them on my bed and hold them down, but they keep squirming. Soon, they get tired and sleep with me, silently, watching TV. Gus is with me as much as possible. Sometimes he's busy playing with Twister, sleeping, or eating. Otherwise, he's playing or sleeping with me. We do so many things together and I'm glad I got him, but technically, he chose me. It was a homeless cat shelter. They were able to catch the kittens, but not there mommy. His brothers and sisters were all playing, but he was sleeping under the table. Soon, he walked out from under the table and slept with me while we cuddled on the couch. That's how I met Gus.

People have feelings for their pets that show that they love them very much. When I had to decide what makes the best pet, I would say that Gus is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me.

When you think about the examples that I gave you, like when I told you about how Gus snuggles against my chin, you saw that Gus IS the best pet and if you don't believe me, you have a problem with deciding who the best pet is.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- introduces a claim about a topic or concept.
  - . . . *I think my pet is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me!*
- supports the claim with logical and detailed evidence.
  - *One of the reasons why my cat Gus is the best pet is because he is a cuddle bug.* The writer elaborates on this point by providing three examples of his cat's affectionate nature: freed from his cage, the cat snuggles against the narrator's chin; the cat rubs against the narrator's legs; and the cat sleeps on the narrator.
  - *A second reason why Gus is the best pet is because he's playful.* The writer elaborates this point with three examples of the cat's playful nature: Gus attacks the narrator's hand; Gus plays with a toy mouse; and Gus attacks the narrator's feet when they are under the covers.
  - *The last reason why Gus is the best pet is because he loves me!* The writer elaborates this point with three examples: Gus runs to greet the narrator when he returns home from school; Gus and the other cat, Twister, scuffle with one another until the narrator separates them, and then they sleep with the narrator as he watches television; and Gus spends as much time as possible in the narrator's company.
- signals the relationship between the reasons.
  - *One of my reasons . . . A second reason . . . The last reason . . .*
- sustains an objective style and tone appropriate for making a case.
  - The style throughout the document is appropriate for convincing readers about the writer's claim and about the reasons that support the claim. Only the last sentence in the three-page-long paper (*. . . if you don't believe me, you have a problem with deciding who the best pet is*) seems inappropriate because it lapses into ad hominem.
- includes only relevant information and evidence in support of claims (although the reference to the cat having come from a homeless shelter might better have been placed in the introduction).
- provides a concluding statement.
  - *When I had to decide what makes the best pet, I would say that Gus is the best pet . . . When you think about the examples that I gave you, like when I told you about how Gus snuggles against my chin, you saw that Gus IS the best pet . . .*

## Student Sample: Grade 7, Informational/Explanatory

The extended project that led to this scientific report required students to review existing research, conduct original research, and produce a report. Although the student who wrote the report was in grade 7, the conceptual understanding it displays is clearly at an exemplary level.

### A Geographical Report

My report is on a very rare and unique wetland that many people do not even know exists. They occur only in a few places around the world.

My topic is created by a specific geographical condition. Vernal pools in San Diego occur only on the local mesas and terraces, where soil conditions allow, but these are the ideal place for much of the city's urban and agricultural development. Is it possible to find a balance between the two conflicting purposes of expansion and preservation?

This raises an interesting question; how can you establish vernal pools being thought of as a geographical asset?

#### METHODS

To answer my question I had to get information on vernal pools: what they are, where they are, and how they are a sensitive natural habitat. Then I needed to examine how city expansion is affecting vernal pools, and if it is apt to continue. I needed to know what the City thinks about the problem and what they are planning to do.

First I looked for any information available on vernal pools at public libraries, but I couldn't find what I was looking for. The topic is apparently too obscure. Next I went to a university library that had an environmental department to get as much information as possible (University of San Diego).

I also interviewed several authorities in the field: the district representative for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the federal agency responsible for the protection of wetlands; a senior environment planner with the City of San Diego, who wrote the City's Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO); the Station botanist at Miramar Naval Air Station, who is in charge of their vernal pool management plan on the land that has the largest number of pools remaining in the City of San Diego; a biologist working for RECON (Regional Environmental Consultants), a firm which is mapping the vernal pools for the City of Hemet, (another city in San Diego County facing the same issues); and finally a geographer working for SANDAG (San Diego Association of Governments), a regional organization that gathers, records, and analyzes data associated with regional planning and environmental issues. They answered many questions and offered their own ideas and information, including additional articles on my subject. I looked at several maps and photos of vernal pools locations, and charts of changing land use.

To decide how much education may be needed about vernal pools, I made a questionnaire, and surveyed two classrooms of elementary students, and a group of forty-two adults, trying to cover most age groups.

#### WHAT VERNAL POOLS ARE

Vernal pools are a unique and rare form of wetland. Wetlands are areas that are covered or soaked by water enough to support plants that grow only in moist ground. Some examples of wetlands are bogs, swamps, marshes, and edges of lakes and streams. These are what people think of when they hear "wetland". But vernal pools are different than these other types of wetlands. They are located on dry and flat places. No one would expect to find a wetland in such a dry area!

San Diego vernal pools are surrounded by small mounds called "mima mounds". The name mima mounds come from the Mima Prairie near Olympia, Washington. People don't know for sure how mima mounds are formed. Some think that they were formed by gophers piling up the earth. Others think that ice wedges from glaciers caused the upheaval, or maybe the wind pushed loose dirt, catching in clumps of shrubs. Mounds can be found on prairies or terraces with a hardpan or clay layer underneath.

Vernal pools are depressions between the mima mounds. In winter the pools are filled by rain storms. In spring the pools look their best, when plants are in full splendor. By summer the pools are dry and look only like a dry pothole, (See illustration of pool cycles and typical cross section.) A vernal pool does not dry by soaking into the ground; the layer of clay or rock underneath the pool prevents the water from soaking through. Instead they dry out from evaporation, or use by the plants. The mima mounds are not impervious so one pool tends to drain into another. Therefore, the pools have to be on flat land; the pools cannot be on a slope or the water would run off, and the pools would not be filled.

[Illustration here]

Typical Cross Section of Vernal Pool

[Illustration here]

Vernal Pool Cycle

### WHY VERNAL POOLS ARE SO IMPORTANT

Vernal pools are a very rare, specific habitat. Hardly any are left, so we don't have many to lose. There used to be vernal pools on many of the mesas and terraces of San Diego County, and the Central Valley of California. Now there are almost no vernal pools in the Central Valley, and an estimated 97% have been lost in San Diego County. An estimated 80% of the remaining pools in San Diego are located on Miramar Naval Air Station. (See map, next page.)

[Illustration here]

Vernal Pool Distribution, San Diego County

It does not take much to disturb a vernal pool. Even grazing or off road vehicle use in the summer, when pool species are dormant and people could think they are just a dry hole, can damage them. Most are disturbed by grading and flattening of their habitat, or by breakup of the impervious layer. With just flat land there would be no depressions for vernal pools to form; what would form would be "vernal mud". With no impervious layer the water would just sink into the ground, and would be there only for a short period of time, not enough for wetland plants.

The mima mounds have to be protected too. If the watershed for the pools is changed, the condition of the pools changes. If there isn't enough water from runoff, then all plant or animal life in them disappears, because they need enough moisture at the right time, to live. If there is too much water, then the pool may turn into another kind of wetland, such as a bog.

Although people have begun to study them, there is still a lot to learn. One thing scientists know is that they are a part of a larger environment. Many animals travel from other areas to feed on plants or animals, or drink from the vernal pools. For example, water fowl from many other places will stop at the pools to eat the fairy shrimp and snack on the plants.

Vernal pools have a large assortment of rare and exotic flora and fauna (plants and animals). Five of them are on the federal list of endangered species, and one more is a candidate for listing. The plants and animals in vernal pools are unusual because they have only developed recently compared to other changes in evolution. As scientists study the pools more intently they are finding more and more unknown species. There are temporary pools in other places around the world, but California's vernal pools are different because of their long drought phase, which causes the plants and animals to adapt to the climate. They go into a dormant phase. For example, fairy shrimp lay eggs before the drought which hatch when it gets moist enough to be active. Some plants, in a short period of time,

develop seeds; others appear to die out, but quickly spout again from the rain. Many of these species cannot survive outside vernal pools, and some are “endemic” (species found only in a very restricted geographical area).

## PROTECTION TECHNIQUES

The first step is to try to keep development away from vernal pools. But to do this you first need to know where the pools are. Thanks to regional mapping efforts, existing vernal pools have been fairly well identified in San Diego County.

There are already laws against disturbances of vernal pools. You could go to jail or get fined a large sum of money for disturbing a wetland. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protects the listed endangered species present, and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers makes sure you don’t fill any kind of wetland habitat, including vernal pools. The local office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has submitted a proposal to Washington for a stricter permit process for vernal pools.

When possible the vernal pools should be part of a large preserve of open space. That way the pools would not be isolated islands, but part of their natural communities, and would be protected by a buffer of distance. Fences should not be put directly around the vernal pools unless it cannot be avoided, because it would keep some animals out, such as rabbits which spread plant seeds around when they eat them.

It is important to educate people about vernal pools so they know how important they are and what they look like, and so they know how to preserve them. To see how much education may be needed in San Diego, I surveyed ninety-two people (forty-two adults and fifty elementary students to try to cover all age groups). I asked them if they had heard of vernal pools, and if they knew what they were. About 21% thought they had heard of them, but only 7% really knew what they were. (See pie chart.) I found that much education is needed.

[Illustration here]

Survey Results

At N.A.S. Miramar the Station botanist has been putting articles dealing with vernal pools in almost every issue of the base newspaper. Now most people on the base know about vernal pools, and know how valuable they are.

## RECOGNIZING AN ASSET

Education is a key to preserving vernal pools. Vernal pools are very unique and we do not have many to lose. Making new ones does not work. Studies done at the University of California, Santa Barbara, have shown that after five years their complexity goes down.

First, vernal pools must be protected. There could be different ranges of accessibility, from remote (available to research only), somewhat accessible (good for guided seasonal visits), to readily accessible (which may have to be protected by fencing or supervision). The most accessible ones would be a great educational opportunity for the general public. The pools closer to development could be developed into nature centers, with raised boardwalks to protect the habitat, as is done over the hot springs in Yellowstone. (See illustration.)

[Illustration here]

Cross Section of Possible Nature Center

Interpretive signs and docents could provide information. Being very unique, vernal pools would make interesting learning centers. People would learn how the plants and animals adapt to the seasonal changes. This would teach people the importance of vernal pools, how complex they are, how to identify them, and how to preserve them



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when wet or dry. A park in the Sacramento area has an adjacent vernal pool with hiking trails around it; and it seems to work there because the people there know how important and delicate it is.

Ecotourism, a popular concept now, would be another idea. San Diego is a place where tourists already come. The very climate and geography that brings people here is what created vernal pools. Ecotourism would be easy to add to the other attractions, and would indirectly benefit the city. A tour company might be authorized to place advertisements to bring people to learn the importance of vernal pools and their ecosystem. With many people outside San Diego knowing about vernal pools and concerned about their well-being, there would be widespread support for vernal pool protection.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of endangering vernal pools will not go away, because the City will need more land to develop. However, vernal pools remain a rare and unique wetland, and need protection. Even though there are laws made to protect them, pools are still being lost. Education is needed. Widespread education showing how important vernal pools are, and how easy they are to disturb, will create widespread support for protection.

A balance between expansion and preservation will not come easily, but if the public views vernal pools as a geographical asset, the balance will shift toward long-term vernal pool preservation.

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## Annotation

The writer of this scientific research report

- provides a clear and coherent introduction that establishes the subject and conveys a knowledgeable stance.
  - *My report is on a very rare and unique wetland that many people do not even know exists. . . . Vernal pools in San Diego occur only on the local mesas and terraces, where soil conditions allow, but these are the ideal place for much of the city's urban and agricultural development.*
- develops the subject through relevant and specific facts and details.
  - *San Diego vernal pools are surrounded by small mounds called "mima mounds".*
  - *. . . the layer of clay or rock underneath the pool prevents the water from soaking through. . . . an estimated 97% [of vernal pools] have been lost in San Diego County.*
- organizes specific information under broader concepts and categories, and provides headings, figures, tables, and diagrams when useful.
  - The writer uses a number of headings to help section off the text: *Methods, What Vernal Pools Are, Why Vernal Pools Are So Important, Protection Techniques, Recognizing an Asset, and Conclusion.*
  - The writer offers a cross-section of a vernal pool, an illustration of the vernal pool cycle, a map of the distribution of vernal pools in San Diego County, a pie chart of responses to the survey, and a cross-section of a possible nature center.
- employs discipline-specific and technical vocabulary.
  - *Vernal pool . . . wetland . . . bogs . . . mima mounds . . . pool cycles . . . habitat . . .*
- maintains a formal, objective style.
  - *Vernal pools have a large assortment of rare and exotic flora and fauna (plants and animals). Five of them are on the federal list of endangered species, and one more is a candidate for listing.*
  - *Vernal pools are a unique and rare form of wetland. Wetlands are areas that are covered or soaked by water enough to support plants that grow only in moist ground.*
- uses strategies to present explanations and manage the complexity of the topic.
  - If/then and cause/effect: *If the watershed for the pools is changed, the condition of the pools changes. If there isn't enough water from runoff, then all plant or animal life in them disappears, because they need enough moisture at the right time, to live.*
  - Definition: *Vernal pools are a unique and rare form of wetland. . . . They are located on dry and flat places. . . . Vernal pools are depressions between the mima mounds. . . . Vernal pools are a very rare, specific habitat.*
  - Comparison/contrast: *Some examples of wetlands are bogs, swamps, marshes, and edges of lakes and streams. . . . But vernal pools are different than these other types of wetlands. They are located on dry and flat places.*

- links ideas and creates cohesion by varying sentence structures to express relationships between ideas.
  - *Vernal pools are a very rare, specific habitat. Hardly any are left, so we don't have many to lose.*
  - *First, vernal pools must be protected. There could be different ranges of accessibility, from remote (available to research only), somewhat accessible (good for guided seasonal visits), to readily accessible (which may have to be protected by fencing or supervision). The most accessible ones would be a great educational opportunity for the general public.*
- emphasizes the most significant information.
- provides a conclusion that follows logically from the information presented.
  - *A balance between expansion and preservation will not come easily, but if the public views vernal pools as a geographical asset, the balance will shift toward long-term vernal pool preservation.*
- demonstrates an exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 7, Argument

This argument was produced for an on-demand assessment. Students were asked to write a letter to their principal about a plan to install video cameras in the classroom for safety reasons. The abbreviated time frame of the assessment (and the consequent lack of opportunity to do research and to revise) explains the absence of information from sources and possibly also the occasional errors.

### Video Cameras in Classrooms

You are seated in class as your teacher explains and points things out on the whiteboard. You twitch your hand, accidentally nudging your pencil, which rolls off your desk and clatters to the floor. As you lean over to pick up your pencil, your cell phone falls out of your coat pocket! Luckily you catch it without your teacher seeing, but it is in plain view of the video camera's shiny lens that points straight at you. The classroom phone rings, and after a brief conversation, your teacher walks over to your desk and kneels down beside you. "About that cell phone of yours . . ." How did that get you in trouble? How could it possibly be a good idea to put cameras in classrooms?

When students are in their classrooms, teachers are in the classroom too, usually. But when a teacher goes out of the classroom, what usually happens is either everything goes on as usual, or the students get a little more talkative. Cameras aren't there because people talk a lot. It is the teacher's job to keep people quiet. If something horrible happened, somebody in class would usually report it, or it would just be obvious to the teacher when he came back that something had happened.

If we already have cameras in the halls, why spend the money to get thirty more cameras for all the different classrooms? Our school district already has a low budget, so we would be spending money on something completely unnecessary. There hasn't been camera-worthy trouble in classrooms. Camera-worthy trouble would be bad behavior every time a teacher left the room. There is no reason to install cameras that might just cause trouble, both for the students and for the budget.

Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room. Some students get nervous and flustered, trying hard to stay focused on their work with a camera focused on them. 90% of students claim that they do better work when they are calmer, and cameras are not going to help. Other students look at cameras as a source of entertainment. These students will do things such as wave at the camera, make faces, or say hi to the people watching through the camera. This could be a big distraction for others who are trying to learn and participate in class. Still other students will try to trick the camera. They will find a way to block the lens or do something that the camera will not be likely to catch. All of these different students will be distracted by the cameras in their classrooms.

Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems. That is why I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this argument

- introduces a claim about a topic or concept, although the student does not state the claim directly until the end of the piece.
  - . . . I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.
- acknowledges and disagrees with a counterclaim.
  - Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems.
- supports his claim with logical reasons.
  - The opening anecdote indicates that students may be unfairly punished for minor and undisruptive actions.
  - [Cameras are not necessary because] [if something horrible happened, somebody in class would usually report it, or it would just be obvious to the teacher when he came back that something had happened].

- . . . we already have cameras in the halls . . .
- Our school district already has a low budget . . .
- supports reasons with relevant evidence.
  - Some students get nervous and flustered, trying hard to stay focused on their work with a camera focused on them.
  - Other students . . . will do things such as wave at the camera, make faces, or say hi to the people watching through the camera.
  - Still other students will try to trick the camera.
- signals the relationship between reasons and evidence using logical connecting words.
  - If . . . already . . . why . . . so . . . Some students . . . Other students . . . These students . . . All of these different students . . .
- sustains an objective style and tone.
  - When students are in their classrooms, teachers are in the classroom too, usually. But when a teacher goes out of the classroom, what usually happens is either everything goes on as usual, or the students get a little more talkative.
  - Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room.
- includes only relevant information and evidence in support of claims, such as in the following example.
  - Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room.
- provides a concluding section that offers a restatement and a recommendation that follows from the argument.
  - Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems. That is why I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.
- demonstrates a very good command of the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 8, Narrative

This narrative was written to fulfill an assignment in which students were asked to introduce a special person to readers who did not know the person. The students were advised to reveal the personal quality of their relationship with the person presented. The grade 8 student who wrote this piece borrowed ideas from a fictional piece she had read.

### Miss Sadie

Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. But I still can see her. The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body. Her summer dresses stained from cooking. I smell her sweet smelling kitchen. I see her gray hair pulled back in that awful, yellow banana clip. Most of all, I hear that voice. So full of character and wisdom.

I used to bring Miss Johnson cookies every summer day of 1988. I miss the days where I would sit on that shabby old porch and listen to her stories. "Melissa!" she would holler. "What 'chu doin' here? Come see me and my poor self, have ya?"

She once told me of her grandmother who escaped slavery, back when white men could only do anything, she would say. Her grandma ran for miles without food or water. It wasn't too long before her master came looking for her and took her home to whip her. I thought of how Blacks are treated today. I sighed. She would sing in her soulful, blaring voice, old negro hymns passed down from her mother and grand mother. I would sit there in amazement.

Once, Jimmy Taylor came walking by us yelling, "Melissa! Whattaya want with that old, fat, Black lady, any ways?"

Before I could retaliate, Miss Johnson said to me, "Now, you musn't, we must feel sorry for that terrible child. His mother must have done gone and not thought him no manners!" She actually wanted me to bow my head and pray for him. (Even though I went to his house and punched him out the next day.)

My friends would tease me for spending the whole summer with Sadie Johnson, "The cookoo of Connecticut," they called her. But I'm so very glad I did. She taught me then, to not care what other people thought. I learned that I could be friends with someone generations apart from my own.

My visits became less frequent when school started. I had other things to think about. Boys, clothes, grades. You know, real important stuff.

One day I was thinking, I haven't seen Miss Sadie in a while. So after school I trotted up to her house amidst the twirling, autumn leaves.

I rang her bell. The door cracked open and the woman adjusted her glasses. "May I help you?"

"Miss Sadie, it's me, Melissa."

"I-I," she'd stuttered. "I don't remember," she said and shut the door. I heard crying. I rang the door again and she screamed, "Please leave?" in a scared, confused voice.

I went home bewildered and my mother told me to stop bothering Miss Sadie. I said I wasn't bothering her. Mama said, "Miss Johnson has a disease. Alzheimer's disease. It makes her forget things . . . people, family even. And so, I don't want you over there anymore, you hear?" Then, I didn't realize or comprehend, how someone so special to you could forget your own existence when you'd shared a summer so special and vivid in your mind.

That Christmas I went to bring Miss Johnson cookies. She wasn't there. I learned from a family member that she was in the hospital and that she'd die very soon. As the woman, a daughter maybe, spoke, my heart broke.

"Well, you make sure she gets these cookies." I said, my voice cracking and tears welling in my eyes.

Today, I've learned to love old people. For their innocence, for their knowledge. I've learned to always treat people with kindness, no matter how cruel they may seem. But mainly I've learned, that you must cherish the time spend with a person. And memories are very valuable. Because Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. I'm glad that I can still see her.

---

## Annotation

The writer of this narrative

- orients readers by backfilling information after entering immediately into the story line.
  - The writer begins in the present, when *Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair*, and then immediately creates an image with specific details of Miss Sadie as she was in the past (*every sway of her big brown body . . . her gray hair pulled back in that awful, yellow banana clip*).
  - The writer skillfully backfills information about the setting (*the old chair squeaking; that shabby old porch*) and the narrator's experiences with Miss Sadie (bringing Miss Sadie cookies, listening to her stories, listening to her sing *old negro hymns*).
- creates an organizing structure in which events are sequenced both chronologically and logically.
  - The embedded incident involving Jimmy Taylor illustrates Miss Sadie's ability to forgive rude behavior.
  - The incident in which the narrator learns that Miss Sadie has Alzheimer's disease advances the action.
- uses a variety of temporal words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, to shift from one time frame to another, and to show the relationships among events.
  - *no longer . . . still . . . used to . . . I miss the days . . . once . . . then . . . Today . . .*
- uses relevant, specific details and literary devices purposefully to develop setting, plot, and character.
  - *The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body.*
  - *Her summer dresses stained from cooking. I smell her sweet smelling kitchen.*
  - *. . . her soulful, blaring voice . . .*
  - *. . . the twirling, autumn leaves.*
  - *The door cracked open . . .*
  - *"I—I," she'd stuttered.*
- uses a variety of techniques to create particular effects.
  - Dialogue: *"Now you musn't, we must feel sorry for that terrible child. His mother must have done gone and not taught him no manners!"*
  - Tension: *I heard crying. I rang the door again and she screamed, "Please leave?" in a scared, confused voice.*
  - Sarcasm and irony: *I had other things to think about. Boys, clothes, grades. You know, real important stuff.*
  - Reflection on events: *Then, I didn't realize or comprehend, how someone so special to you could forget your own existence when you'd shared a summer so special and vivid in your mind.*



- shows internal mental processes to develop complex characters and convey their motives and emotional responses.
  - *"Whattaya want with that old, fat, Black lady, any ways?"*
  - *As the woman, a daughter maybe, spoke, my heart broke.*
- provides an engaging conclusion that returns to the beginning.
  - In the closing, the writer returns to the image in the beginning of the narrative (*Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days. But I still can see her*) to reflect on the importance of memories (*I'm glad that I can still see her*).
- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - Occasional sentence fragments were likely included for stylistic purposes (e.g., *The old chair squeaking with every sway of her big, brown body; Her summer dresses stained from cooking; Because Miss Sadie no longer sits in her rocking chair on her porch on summer days*).

## Student Sample: Grade 8, Informational/Explanatory

This essay was written about a favorite activity. The writer wrote for one entire class period the first day and revised his essay the second day after discussing ideas for revision with a partner.

### Football

What I like doing best is playing football, mainly because it is one of my best sports. One of the greatest things about it, in my opinion, is the anticipation, wondering what the other players are thinking about what you might do. Football is a physical game, of course, but it's the mental aspect that I appreciate the most.

At times football can get grueling, which makes the game even more exciting. The first time you make contact with another player (even with all that equipment) you get very sore. That is true for everyone, but in time you get used to the aches and pains. After awhile, you develop mental discipline, which allows you to ignore some of the pain. The mental discipline then allows you to go all out, to unload everything you have, every play. That's how you win games, everyone going all out, giving 110%.

The game takes concentration, just as much as any other sport, if not more. You develop this aspect in practice. That is why it is so important to have hours and hours of it. Mentally, you have to get over the fear, the fear of eleven madmen waiting for chance to make you eat dirt. And that comes through practice. Once you overcome the fear, you can concentrate on the more important things, like anticipating the other guy's next move. Studying the playbook and talking with other players also helps.

During the game, your mind clears of all thoughts. These thoughts become instinct. You have to react, and react quickly, and you develop reactions and instinct in practice. For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled. But, you should react instinctively to that situation by increasing your momentum.

Playing defense, all you want to do is hit the man with the ball, hit him hard. Right when you unload for a stick, all your body tightens. Then you feel the impact. After you regain your thoughts, you wonder if you're all right. You wait for your brain to get the pain signal from the nerves. Even so, if you do get that signal, which is always the case, you keep right on playing. You can't let that experience shake your concentration.

On offense, while playing receiver, you can actually "hear" the footsteps of the defensive back as you're concentrating on catching the ball. What separates the men from the boys is the one who "hears" the footsteps but doesn't miss the ball. That's mental discipline, concentration.

Football is very physical or else it wouldn't be fun. But it is also a mental game and that is why it's challenging. You can get hurt in football if you screw up and ignore the right way to do things. However, mental discipline and concentration, which you develop during hours of practice, helps you avoid such mistakes.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this explanation

- establishes the topic in an introduction that provides a sense of what is to follow.
  - *What I like doing best is playing football . . . Football is a physical game, of course, but it's the mental aspect that I appreciate the most.*
- develops the subject through relevant and specific facts, details, and examples.
  - *At times football can get grueling, which makes the game even more exciting. The first time you make contact with another player (even with all that equipment) you get very sore.*
  - *For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled.*

- organizes specific information under broader concepts or categories.
  - Information is organized into three components of the mental aspect of football: discipline, concentration, and instinct.
- uses factual, precise language and maintains a relatively formal style (with occasional lapses into cliché and undefined terms).
  - *Mentally, you have to get over the fear, the fear of eleven madmen waiting for chance to make you eat dirt.*
  - *That's how you win games, everyone going all out, giving 110%. . . you'll be leveled . . . Right when you unload for a stick . . .*
- uses strategies appropriate to informational and explanatory texts, such as definition, compare/contrast, and cause/effect.
  - Definition: *What separates the men from the boys is the one who "hears" the footsteps but doesn't miss the ball. That's mental discipline, concentration.*
  - Compare/contrast: *The game takes concentration, just as much as any other sport, if not more.*
  - Cause/effect: *If you don't [have more momentum] you'll be leveled.*
- uses appropriate links to join ideas and create cohesion.
  - *At times . . . The first time . . . After a while . . . During the game . . . For example . . . But . . . Playing defense . . . After . . . On offense . . . However . . .*
- provides only accurate and relevant information, such as in the following example.
  - *For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled.*
- provides a conclusion that follows logically from the explanation presented.
  - The conclusion emphasizes the importance of the controlling idea (the mental aspect of football) but in a new light: *You can get hurt in football if you screw up and ignore the right way to do things. However, mental discipline and concentration, which you develop during hours of practice, helps you avoid such mistakes.*
- demonstrates a good command of the conventions of standard written English.
  - While there are some minor errors (e.g., *But, you should react instinctively . . .*), there are also some stylistically interesting constructions (e.g., *Playing defense, all you want to do is hit the man with the ball, hit him hard*).

## Student Sample: Grade 8, Informational/Explanatory

This analysis of a work of literature was completed as a homework assignment for an English class.

### The Old Man and the Sea

In the book The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway tells the story of an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago who, considered by the villagers to be the worst type of unlucky, is still determined to win a battle against a giant Marlin off the coast of Cuba. Santiago succeeds, but his successes do not come without great hardship and struggle. He spends three days being dragged in his skiff by the enormous marlin with minimal food and water, all the while enduring acute physical pain, tiredness, and an unending loneliness due to the absence of his young friend, Manolin. It is only after Santiago's prize fish is completely devoured by sharks that he returns home to the village scorners and the safety of Manolin's trust. As his suffering and loss compound, we can see that Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" offers a key insight into Santiago's life.

As the story begins, we learn that Santiago has gone eighty-four days straight without catching a fish. Young Manolin's parents will no longer allow the two to fish together, for they do not want their son being exposed any more to this type of failure. Santiago and Manolin are deeply saddened by this news, but Santiago does not let the loss of his friend or the defeat that others see him suffering keep him off the sea. Rather, with bright and shining eyes he thinks "maybe today. Every day is a new day" (pg. 32), and prepares to catch the biggest fish of his life. This shows that even though almost all of Santiago's acquaintances feel that his fishing career is over, he sees it about to reach its all time high. Though he knows he is physically older and weaker than most of his fellow fisherman, he refuses to let their opinions and stereotypes destroy his confidence and determination.

As the story progresses, Hemingway presents an even more vivid picture of Santiago refusing to be destroyed by the forces that threaten to defeat him. Even after he accomplishes the difficult task of hooking the giant Marlin, he finds his skiff being dragged by the fish for over two days. Living in the small boat is no easy task for Santiago, and soon injury and suffering seem to take over his entire body. His back is sore from sitting so long against the stiff wood, his face is cut from fishing hooks, his shoulders ache, and his eyes have trouble focusing. Most difficult to endure though is the terrible condition in which he finds his hands. The left one is weakened from a period of being tightly cramped, and both are extremely mutilated from the burn of the moving fishing line. It would have been so much easier for Santiago to simply give up and release the fish, yet he knows that if he endures a little longer, victory will be his. Even when it seems he has no effort left, Santiago promises himself "I'll try it again." (pg. 93) This is Santiago's real inner determination coming through. He has encountered so many obstacles during the past few days, yet he will not let them defeat his dream of killing the fish. There is no outside force promising a splendid reward if he succeeds, only those that threaten to ridicule him if he is destroyed. Santiago is working solely on his own desire to fulfill his dream and prove to himself that, although his struggles may cost him his life, he can accomplish even the seemingly impossible.

After three long days and nights, Santiago's determination pays off, and at last he manages to catch and kill the Marlin. It is only a very short time that he has to relish in his triumph though, for a few hours later vicious sharks begin to destroy the carcass of the great fish. For hours, Santiago manages to ward them off, but this time it is not he who wins the final battle. Spirits low and pain at an all time high, Santiago returns to the village, towing behind him only the bare skeleton of a treasure that once was. It seems as though Santiago is ready to just curl up and die, and indeed he has reason to feel this way. Yet as he rests alone and talk with Manolin, we see a hint of Santiago's determination, that has characterized his personality throughout the entire story, begin to shine through. Upon reaching home, he begins to make plans with Manolin about future adventures they will have together. Hemingway tells us that Santiago, in his youth, had loved to watch the majestic lions along his home on a white sand beach in Africa, and he still returns to those dreams when searching for contentment. That night, as Santiago drifts off to sleep, Hemingway tells that he was indeed "dreaming about the lions." (pg. 127) This is perhaps the truest test of how much courage and determination a person has. If even when they have suffered the biggest defeat of their life, they

are able to look to the future and realize the wonderful things they still possess. Though the forces of nature and time destroyed Santiago's prize fish, he refuses to let that fact ruin the rest of his life. No one can take away his love for Manolin or memories of what once was, and because of this, no one can ever truly defeat Santiago.

In conclusion, throughout the entire story *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago refuses to surrender to the forces working against him. He ignores the comments of those who think he is unlucky, endures great physical pain, and rises up from the depths of sorrow over the lost Marlin to find happiness in what he does possess. Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" truly does display the amount of determination that Santiago shows throughout his life.

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## Annotation

The writer of this explanation

- establishes the topic in an introduction that provides a sense of what is to follow.
  - The writer provides a brief summary of the plot in the introduction and then uses a quotation to advance the thesis of the essay: *As his suffering and loss compound, we can see that Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" offers a key insight into Santiago's life.*
- develops the subject through relevant and specific facts, details, quotations, information, and examples.
  - The second, third, and fourth paragraphs each tell part of the story and support the writer's thesis by providing examples of Santiago's struggle and determination (e.g., *Rather, with bright and shining eyes he thinks "maybe today. Every day is a new day" (pg. 32), and prepares to catch the biggest fish of his life.*
  - The writer uses concrete details to illustrate Santiago's suffering (e.g., *eighty-four days straight without catching a fish; [hands] extremely mutilated from the burn of the moving fishing line; towing behind him only the bare skeleton of a treasure that once was.*
- uses precise language and maintains a formal, objective style.
  - *In the book *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway tells the story of an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago who, considered by the villagers to be the worst type of unlucky, is still determined to win a battle against a giant Marlin off the coast of Cuba.*
  - *As the story begins, we learn . . . In conclusion . . .*
- employs strategies appropriate to explanatory texts.
  - Two key elements of the quotation in the introduction (*destroyed but not defeated*) are used as devices to help establish the structure.
- uses appropriate links to join ideas and create cohesion.
  - *As the story progresses . . . Even after . . . After three long days and nights . . . In conclusion, throughout the entire story *The Old Man and the Sea* . . .*
- provides a conclusion that follows logically from the explanation presented.
  - In the last paragraph, the writer summarizes the elements of the narrative that support his thesis and returns to the quotation in the thesis statement (*Hemingway's quote "a man can be destroyed but not defeated" truly does display the amount of determination that Santiago shows throughout his life.*
- demonstrates a very good command of the conventions of standard written English.